



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Sara L. Hensley

SUBJECT: ANIMAL LICENSE AMNESTY
AND SHELTER AWARENESS

DATE: 05-24-04

Approved

Date

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

SNI AREA: N/A

RECOMMENDATION

Approve a one-month animal license amnesty program.

BACKGROUND

The City of San José requires that all owners of adult dogs and cats vaccinate and license their pets. These laws ensure rabies vaccinations are current, provide a mechanism for identification, and serve to offset some of the costs associated with the animal services program. The consequences for failing to vaccinate or license a dog or cat can result in administrative citations with fines ranging from \$100 to \$250 and/or a misdemeanor charge. In addition, late fees are established for certain circumstances beyond 60 days after the animal turns four months, more than 60 days after the dog or cat was acquired or brought into the City, or more than 30 days after the expiration of a previously issued license. The proposed City fee schedule requires that the licensing fee for a non-sterilized dog be at least double the fee required for a sterilized dog.

In the fall of 2004, the City expects to open its new state of the art Animal Care Center. This 50,000 plus square foot facility will house all the stray and homeless animals from our communities. The total number of animals expected annually will be 20,000 to 22,000. The new shelter will serve approximately 925,000 residents and more than 285,000 households. For the last several decades, the Humane Society of Silicon Valley provided these shelter services.

ANALYSIS

The local Humane Society is the only shelter in the community and is located in the City of Santa Clara. Once the San José Animal Care Center opens, it is critical that the community

become aware of the new service provider. As part of the effort to provide animal care and control services to the community, the City must be committed to notifying as many households as possible. Notice is particularly important for pet owners who are looking for their lost pets because the Animal Care Center cannot impound animals indefinitely, and re-uniting them with their owner is a priority.

The renewal of licenses provides the City with resources to offset some of the cost of maintaining the animal services program. The critical and more difficult aspect of an effective licensing program is increasing the number of households that license their pets. Generally, the process to verify rabies vaccinations and renew licenses for residents with existing licenses is automated. The opening of the new Animal Care Center offers the City a unique opportunity to notify the public of the licensing requirements. Specifically, the City can inform the public through television, newspaper, direct mail, and radio of the new facility, its location and operating hours, and of the licensing requirements.

As part of this notification process, Animal Care and Services proposes to outreach with a direct mailer to all households in the City. The mailer will also offer a one-month amnesty on licensing for all pet owners. Specifically, Animal Care and Services proposes to place a hold on all citation activity, charge no late fees, and offer low cost rabies vaccination to encourage pet owners to come into compliance with the law, become familiar with the new facility, and potentially encourage interest in adoptions.

The mailer and one-month amnesty marks the official start of an organized license program. As part of this program, part-time license canvassers will be assigned to walk the neighborhoods of the City and check for animal licenses door-to-door. The canvassing activity will be supported by the fees collected and will be self-sufficient as a result of the revenue generated from improved compliance with the licensing requirements. The license canvassers will provide licensing registration to pet owners at their residence and issue a citation if the owner fails to secure a license within 10 days. The 10-day grace period is a great motivator and in the past, the City has experienced over 80% compliance with this approach. The most current data illustrate that between FY 2002-2003 and FY 2003-2004 (first three quarters), the City noted an increase of 65% in new licensing activity.

The third phase of this strategy is to change and add some needed fees. Animal Care and Services has proposed an increase in the unaltered license fees for dogs and cats. The higher fee for a non-sterilized dog is intended to encourage the spaying and neutering of dogs and to place the increased cost of animal control for non-sterilized dogs on the owner of a non-sterilized dog. The fees for altered dogs and cats would remain the same. The recommended fee changes are included in the 2004-2005 Proposed Fees and Charges Report and it is recommended that these new fees would not become effective until after the amnesty period to give owners an incentive to license their pets.

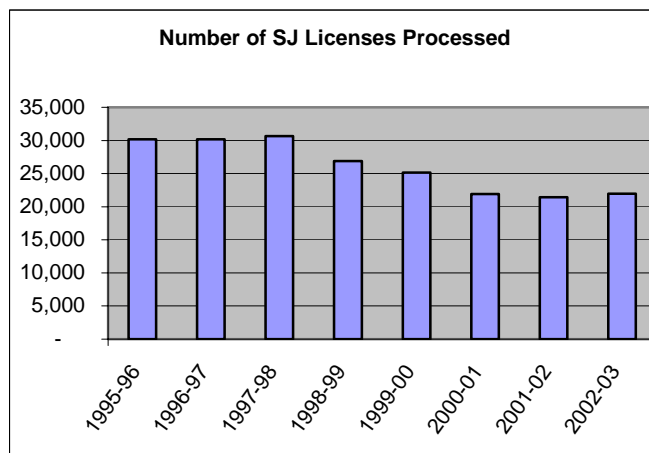
Dog unaltered: \$32/year, would increase to \$50/year

Cat unaltered: \$19/year, would increase to \$25/year

Dog altered: \$15/year, no change

Cat altered: \$7/year, no change

The following graph illustrates the last eight years of licensing activity in the City. The total number of animal licenses has declined since the 1998-1999 fiscal year. Animal population estimations, derived using a formula from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and 2000 census data for San José, are: dogs 189,000, cats 204,000. Currently, the number of animals licensed represents about 5% of the total estimated.



It is estimated that an amnesty program will bring in an additional 2,200 licenses. The revenue associated with those new licenses is approximately \$50,000 in the first year and would continue for several years with a slight decline as pet owners move or no longer own the pet. This revenue would more than offset expected costs associated with postage, printing and translating the mailer, as well as the additional labor required to manage the program.

COST IMPLICATIONS

Although this proposal would expend funds on notification to residents, the net impact to the General Fund should be positive. Animal Care and Services will be able to absorb this cost from its current proposed 2004-2005 operating budget appropriation with the expectation that the appropriation will be adjusted at midyear to reflect actual expenditures associated with this program and declare the additional revenue received.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The content of this memo was discussed and endorsed at the April 4, 2004 meeting of the Animal Advisory Committee, an eight-member group of community members.

UCOORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

CEQA

Not a project.

SARA L. HENSLEY
Director of Parks, Recreation
and Neighborhood Services